



Affirmation:

United Methodists for Gay and Lesbian Concerns

Dec 1983 ?

RECEIVED
FEB 23 2024

Post Office Box 1021

Evanston, Illinois 60204

RECEIVED
PERIODICALS

BY:

Reconciling Congregation Program JAN 2 1984

Along with Affirmation's dialogue with United Methodist leaders nationally in past years, many members of the Affirmation network have engaged in educational and advocacy work in local churches. Personal contact and dialogue with individuals at a local level is one of the most effective forms of social change. Many local churches have been quietly engaged in ministry to and with lesbians and gay men, but their work is drowned out by the homophobic actions and statements of other local churches.

The Reconciling Congregation Program formalizes and expands our advocacy work on the local level. This program was enthusiastically endorsed by the participants at the Affirmation meeting in Baltimore in September. The purpose of the program is three-fold: 1) to identify local churches where we are welcome to participate in the full life of the congregation; 2) to provide a vehicle for ongoing education and ministries involving lesbians and gay men at the local level; 3) to empower local churches to advocate lesbian and gay concerns in their communities and to work as

a network for such advocacy on the national level.

The program, modeled after the "More Light" program in the United Presbyterian Church, is explained in the brochure which accompanies this newsletter. Members of the Affirmation network in different regions of the country have agreed to serve as resource persons with local churches which are interested in the program. If you know a local church which could be interested in the program, you can write to the address on the brochure or call Mark Bowman at [REDACTED]. At that point you or the appropriate person will be put in contact with a resource person who can provide some guidance and suggestions for initiating the program in that local church.

The Reconciling Congregation Program promises to open new avenues of dialogue and advocacy in United Methodist churches for lesbians and gay men. It also will provide an arena of activity for members of the Affirmation network who have asked for ways to address lesbian and gay concerns at a local level.

MCC and the NCC

At the Baltimore Affirmation meeting, the group was honored by the presence of several folks who have been a part of the Metropolitan Community Church discussion with the National Council of Churches. A representative of MCC explained to the group the options which were open to their church and asked for Affirmation's input. The representative explained that a basic purpose for the attempt to gain membership on the council has been to create the climate for dialogue and dealing with the issue.

At the recent N.C.C. meeting, then, the body "voted not to vote" on the issue of MCC's membership on the council. Paul Vandenberg, an Affirmation member and a

member of the United Methodist delegation, said that in a resolution which dealt with logistics, the council created a compromise which keeps the lines of communication open. "It was not a no vote; it was not a yes vote." Vandenberg indicated that the MCC is pleased with the decision.

The results of the compromise vote have been 1) a new gay/lesbian and friends caucus has been organized in the NCC; 2) the MCC will continue to be an active part of several committees of the council; and 3) there will be an active effort to nominate gay men and lesbians to the council.

Vandenberg stated also that the United Methodist delegation voted almost in a block in favor of the MCC.

"Homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth, who need the ministry and guidance of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship which enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self."

-The Book of Discipline

* * * * *

To become a Reconciling Congregation a local church undertakes study, discussion, and prayer leading to the intentional inclusion of lesbians and gay men in the life and ministry of the congregation. The local church adopts a "Reconciling Statement" proclaiming the decision and intention, and registers that intent through this program. (A sample statement can be found in this brochure.)

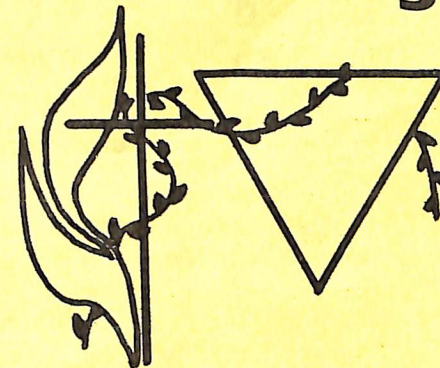
A Reconciling Congregation then seeks to include lesbians and gay men and their concerns in the ongoing ministry & mission of the local church. A communication network between Reconciling Congregations will provide resources, activities, and study materials.

Contributions to the program from Reconciling Congregations will be used to defray communications and resource development costs.

* * * * *

The Reconciling Congregation Program
is sponsored by Affirmation: United
Methodists for Lesbians and Gay Concerns

reconciling



**congregation
program**

A STUDY/ACTION PROGRAM
OF JUSTICE AND SUPPORT
FOR LESBIANS AND GAY MEN
WITHIN THE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1983

A STATEMENT OF RECONCILIATION

RECONCILING CONGREGATIONS

are local churches which:

A C C E P T *lesbians, gay men,
and their families;*

H E A L *the gulf between the U.M.
Church and its lesbian and
gay members;*

M I N I S T E R *to and with
lesbians and gay men.*

A growing network of United Methodist churches are deciding that they can only be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ by affirming lesbians and gay men.

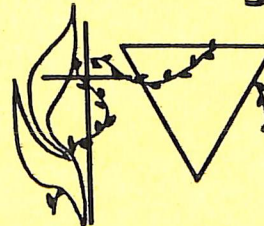
WILL YOU JOIN US?

All persons are recipients of God's love and grace, God intends the church to be a community which embodies love, grace and justice for all people. As a sign of faithfulness to God's covenant with all humankind, God is challenging the Christian community to accept lesbians and gay men as sisters, brothers, and co-workers in the household of faith.

We affirm the participation of lesbians and gay men in all aspects of our life together. We seek to address and advocate the needs and concerns of gay men and lesbians in our church and our society. We strive to utilize the gifts of all persons in our ministry without regard to sexual/affectional preference.

We are distressed by the presence of homophobia within the United Methodist Church and in our society. Such fear and hatred does not reflect God's love, nor God's intent for the community of faith. We hope that our affirmation of the wholeness of all persons will bring reconciliation to all people within the church who because of prejudice, homophobia, or ignorance find themselves in exile from the family of God.

reconciling



**congregation
program**

*For more information on this
program you can write to:*

*Reconciling Congregation
Program*

P.O. Box 24213

Nashville, TN 37202

Coordinating Committee To Be Chosen

In 1981 Affirmation set in motion a twelve-month process of discernment through which we explored leadership and organizational options, then selected the approach believed to be most effective and appropriate for Affirmation's overall purpose and immediate goals. In describing the nature and characteristics of our choice, we stated in the June 1982 Affirmation Newsletter, "An exciting new format designed to broaden Affirmation's base of leadership and input was implemented...major work areas were organized into five task forces to be handled by five regionally-based groups. The five task forces include Nurturing, National Church, Communication, Education, and Fundraising."

In describing the Coordinating Committee portion of the new organizational style, the June 1982 Newsletter states, "A ten-member Coordinating Committee was called for, made up of an equal number of women and men and including persons of various ages and ethnic groups who have a spirit of openness and energy to invest in the work of Affirmation. Two members of the Coordinating Committee will act as Affirmation's spokespersons. Each Coordinating Committee member will work with one of the five task forces, serving as liaison for purposes of clear communication, unified direction and comprehensive input."

At the September 1983 Affirmation meeting in Baltimore we reaffirmed this style of leadership and organization. It is now time to name the 1984-86 Coordinating Committee. In keeping with our commitment to a collaborative shared leadership which brings diverse gifts and perspectives to Affirmation's nationwide work, we ask you to assist us in this Coordinating Committee formation. The present Coordinating Committee is charged with the task of nominating the 1984-86 Coordinating Committee at our April 27-29 national meeting in Baltimore. The major nominating work will be done at a Coordinating Committee meeting to be held February 18-20. We want and need your suggestions for potential 1984-86 Coordinating Committee members. Please give some careful attention to this important part of Affirmation's work, keeping in mind our commitment to ethnic diversity, gender parity, varieties of age and geographic location.

Send any names to be considered to Morris Floyd or Mary Gaddis (see CC addresses elsewhere in this newsletter), by February 1, 1984. If you have suggestions that will strengthen our Coordinating Committee approach or overall leadership and organizational style, please send those also. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!



Affirmation Platform Statement

The Affirmation Platform statement is in its final stages of preparation and will be available after the first of the year. Copies of the statement were distributed to the press during the General Conference Press Briefing in November. The statement is now receiving final editing and condensing. For copies, contact Affirmation at the Evanston Post Office Box.

Affirmation Buttons Available

Affirmation buttons have been printed and are ready for sale. The buttons, printed with the Affirmation insignia on a Pink Triangle, are available for a donation of \$1.00. The proceeds for the sale will go to Affirmation as we prepare for the events of the next year. For buttons ordered in bulk, a price may be negotiated. Order your buttons from D. J. Porter, [REDACTED] New Hope, PA [REDACTED].

Covenant Groups Designed

Birthered at the September meeting in Baltimore was a model of care-taking for Affirmation members at General Conference. This model of networking, covenant groups, grew out of a concern that, given a possible hostile climate at General Conference, a main agenda for Affirmation needed to be caring for those of us present there.

Each covenant group will consist of 6-8 persons. One or two persons out of each group could be persons not present at General Conference who commit to be available by telephone for support during the 10 days. The make-up of the groups will be varied, but integral to each group will be a certain level of trust and commonality. The groups will exist as small communities throughout General Conference and will meet

together as the group needs for its support. (For example, a group may covenant to meet briefly once each day to process events or gather support.)

Just prior to the beginning of General Conference, time will be given to training for the covenant groups. The purpose of the training will be to allow members of the groups to develop trust, to get to know how each person might react in particular situations, and to think through the kinds of situations which might occur during the course of the conference.

Participation in a covenant group is greatly encouraged for Affirmation folk attending General Conference. It is hoped that this new creation may be a tool of nurturing in our journey together.

Upcoming All-Membership Telephoning

All Affirmation members will be receiving a phone call some time in the next couple of months. A special group of Affirmation members will be contacting the entire mailing list to update persons on Affirmation's plans for General Conference, to encourage support in a variety of ways, and to clean up the mailing list. Listen for your call soon. . .

Affirmation Meeting Dates

April 27-29, 1984	Baltimore, MD
May 1-10, 1984	General Conference
September 14-16, 1984	TBA
April 12-14, 1985	TBA
September 20-22, 1985	TBA
April 4-6, 1986	TBA

Renewal Information

Many of you may have noticed something new on your mailing labels. There is now a code on labels which helps remind folks when their last subscription fee was received. Labels now carry a date indicating one year from your most recent expression of support or interest in Affirmation's work. Remember that we ask for a contribution of \$15 or more to keep the newsletter coming your way. (A contribution of \$20 is needed for newsletters sent first class in a sealed envelope.) Send your renewals and contributions to Affirmation, [redacted] Evanston, IL [redacted].

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Mary Gaddis, [redacted] Holy City, CA
[redacted]
Morris Floyd, [redacted]
Minneapolis, MN [redacted]
[redacted]
Ava Scott, [redacted] Philadelphia
PA [redacted]
Michael Collins, [redacted]
[redacted] New York, NY [redacted]
John Hannay, [redacted]
Washington, D.C. [redacted]
Lyle Loder, [redacted] Los Angeles,
CA [redacted]
Two Lesbian Members whose names cannot be used.

EDGEHILL UMC
1502 Edgehill Ave.
Nashville, TN. 37212

0184
Comm. on Archives & History
P.O. Box 127
Madison, NJ 07940

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
P A I D
Nashville, TN.
Permit # 2396